

## **Tithe and Offering Appeals for 2018 in English**



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North American Division  
2018 Offertory Readings

Our mission as a church is “to reach the North American Division territory with the distinctive, Christ-centered Seventh- day Adventist message of Hope and Wholeness.” Stewardship Ministries is dedicated to helping members catch this vision. Funds received through offerings make an impact on preaching the gospel to save the lost.

Systematic giving is part of being a faithful steward. When we return tithe, we are recognizing that God owns everything. Giving offerings expresses our gratitude for what God has done for us. God loves a cheerful giver, and He has chosen this method to support those who preach the gospel as they reach the world with His message.

You will find an extensive selection of videos that emphasize various offerings by visiting our website at [www.nadstewardship.org](http://www.nadstewardship.org). You can use them in conjunction with the offering appeals or in place of. They average between a-minute-and-a-half to two minutes in length.

Faithful stewardship is a matter of the heart. We don’t give to receive love and blessings from God. We give because we have already received God’s love and blessings. We give because our hearts and lives are full of the joy of the Lord, and giving is a natural response. We give because we want to live out God’s character of abundant generosity—especially as exhibited through the giving of the Ultimate gift: the life of His Son.

God’s blessings to you as you help others experience the joy of faithful stewardship.

**John Matthews**  
Director

**Bonita Shields**  
Associate Director

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## About the Author

James Hoffer is a retired Seventh-day Adventist minister. He served for 46 years as a pastor in the Ohio, Michigan, and Chesapeake conferences, including six years as a departmental secretary in Uruguay and Brazil.



He is an author, public speaker, poet, editor, proofreader, musician, and linguist fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, with a working knowledge of German and Italian. After retiring, he was a copy editor and proofreader for the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Hagerstown, Maryland. The recent publication of his book, *Secrets and Mysteries of the Lost Ark: A Bible Adventure* ([www.lostarkseminar.com](http://www.lostarkseminar.com)), has led to speaking appointments at camp meetings, pastoral retreats, and churches.

Jim is also an amateur radio operator with the call sign KW8T, and since 1985 he has served as world president of the Adventist Amateur Radio Association International ([www.aarai.org](http://www.aarai.org)).

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## About the Personal Giving Plan...

The North American Division encourages the use of the Personal Giving Plan. This plan was developed to assist members in systematic giving. The plan suggests that, in addition to returning 10 percent of a member's personal income as tithe, certain percentages be dedicated as offering to three main categories:

Local Church Budget: 3-5 percent  
Conference Advance: 1-2 percent (Education, evangelism,  
VBS, summer camps, and union magazines)  
World Budget: 1-3 percent

### Thirteenth Sabbath Offerings 2018

Inter-American Division      March 31\*

#### North American Division

June 30\* Northern Asia-Pacific Division

September 29\*

Southern Asia-Pacific Division

December 29\*

### Mission Investment Projects 2018

North Pacific Union\* Lake Union\*

\* Special Project Development

Author: James Hoffer Editor: Bonita J. Shields

Cover and Layout: Vanessa Perlá

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Dear Presenter,

Thank you for your willingness to share the offering appeals with your local congregation. It is a wonderful and gratifying responsibility. How you present these readings could determine how effective they are. Here are some suggestions you may want to consider before you share:

**Pray:** Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray that God will use your words to speak to the hearts of the congregation.

**Practice:** Read over the appeal at least three times to familiarize yourself with it. Find key words (underline or highlight them) to emphasize throughout the reading. Strive to share these readings with excellence.

**Preparation:** There may be times when other materials are sent to your local church to distribute or present along with the appeal. Please use them accordingly, and determine how they can be used most effectively.

**Present With Passion:** Read slowly and clearly. It is an amazing responsibility to lead out the worship in giving. Fill your heart with the thoughts presented, and God will do the rest.

May God richly bless you and speak through you as we take this journey together in 2018.

Dear Presenter,

Thank you for your willingness to share the offering appeals with your local congregation. It is a wonderful and gratifying responsibility. How you present these readings could determine how effective they are. Here are some suggestions you may want to consider before you share:

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January 6

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Taking inventory.* For businesses and enterprises whose fiscal year coincides with the calendar year, the first week of January is crucial. And the numbers they come up with have a direct bearing on their business tax liability. The average person would have no idea of the complexity of this process. Goods on hand, goods sold, goods in transit, raw materials, equipment including vehicles, etc.—it all figures in, and depending on the size of the company or store, it usually requires the collaboration of a team of people.

On a personal level, the beginning of the year is an opportune time for the Christian to take a “spiritual inventory.” This is what happened at the end of each Hebrew year, in conjunction with the Day of Atonement. The Bible records it this way: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD” (Lev. 23:26, 27, NKJV). The NIV renders “afflict your souls” as “deny yourselves.” It refers to a special time of fasting, prayer, and no doubt self- examination.

How did I handle my stewardship obligations last year? How will I handle them this year? May we not only give liberally for today’s offering, but this very week lay out a plan of systematic giving for ourselves and our families for 2018.

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*The supreme sacrifice.* Many have had the privilege of participating in the Great Controversy Tour with Dr. and Mrs. Gerard Damsteegt of the Theological Seminary at Andrews University. It is an awesome experience to see history up close and personal, visiting Rome, Geneva, Zurich, Konstanz, Paris, and other Reformation sites. Probably the most impressive sites include the Colosseum, where many Christians were fed to the lions or burned at the stake; the cave in northern Italy, where many Waldensians were hunted down and killed; and Konstanz, site of the burning at the stake of both Hus and Jerome. To be standing at those very spots is an immensely moving moment. There was virtually no religious liberty in those dark days.

Of course, these dedicated believers were only following in the footsteps of their Savior, who was tortured and died on the cross, becoming the supreme sacrifice of all time.

It sort of puts our little sacrifices to shame, doesn't it? Honestly now, how many of us have really sacrificed for the Lord?

1 Corinthians 5:7 tells us that "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (NKJV). And Hebrews 13:15 adds: "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." To the best of our ability, and with God's help, let us plan to sacrifice for Him and His cause, with our offerings, yes, but if necessary with our very lives.

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January 20

## OUR LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*A thousand ways.* Several years ago, when Pastor and Mrs. James Hoffer lived in St. Joseph, Michigan, they had dear neighbors across the street. The husband worked for the Whirlpool Corporation in Benton Harbor. One of his responsibilities was that of serving as chauffeur, meeting important people at the various nearby airports, and driving them to and from company headquarters. As such, he was required to wear a nice business suit and tie to work every day. The Hoffers had always been faithful tithers, but at that time in their lives were struggling financially. They also knew that God has a thousand ways to provide for His faithful children, and were about to learn one of them.

One day the neighbor called to say that they were planning to have a yard sale, and because Whirlpool had recently changed their dress code to casual, now her husband had several nice suits that he no longer needed. Then she said something like this: “Before I offer these nice suits to the public, I wonder whether you and Jim would like to come across the street and see whether any of them fit Jim; if so, we will make a special price.” Sure enough, five of the seven or eight suits were a perfect fit without any alterations. The price, \$15 each! Unbelievable! He still wears some of those suits today.

Be faithful in your giving! Do you like surprises? So does God, and you never know what He has in store for you next!

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January 27

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Roof Repairs.* The roof on the church in Tawas City, Michigan had seen better days. The asphalt roofing material was curling up in multiple places, and though it had not yet begun to leak, it was clear that it would need to be replaced before winter. It would cost \$18,000 to replace the roof. For a church with less than 15 actively attending members and very little reserves this seemed like an impossibility.

As the trees began to turn yellow-gold, and then red, showing that winter was fast approaching, the church members began to pray and work. They dug into their pockets sacrificially, collected pledges, and in two short months were able to raise over \$7,000 towards the new roof. While this was a remarkable amount for such a small group, it was nowhere near what was needed.

The church submitted an appeal to MAP requesting funds to help with the new roof. The committee was faced with the difficult situation of having received more requests than funds. After prayerfully considering the requests by God's grace they were able to contribute \$5000 toward the completion of the new roof.

Paul in his address to the elders of the church in Ephesus said, "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35) We are so grateful for our Michigan Advance Partners whose generosity helped us in our time of need.

Please join us by making MAP a part of your systematic giving, so that together God can use us to support His work in many different ways all across Michigan.

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February 3

## OUR LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Attributed value.* One of the churches in the Berrien Springs area was planning a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. About three days before they were to leave, the organizer of the trip, a Spanish pastor in the area, called another pastor and said that something important had come up. He was not going to be able to go as their translator, and would he consider going in his place? This former missionary, who knew Spanish well, said that he would go.

Just three days to pack! As he was preparing his suitcase and thinking about the destination, he remembered a beaten-up old baseball glove that was taking up space in a closet. Baseball is very much in the blood of Dominican boys, and a fortunate few find it to be a ticket to residence in the United States and maybe even to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

During his time there, the pastor prayed and watched for just the right young man to appear. And, sure enough, a 14-year-old caught his eye. He had been extremely helpful at the construction site every day without fail. On the last day of the project, the pastor called him over and presented him with that baseball glove. The boy was thrilled! To him it was worth a million bucks, while for the pastor it was just a throwaway item from the closet.

Worth and value are attributed. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. As you consider your monetary resources, how much are they worth in the light of eternity?

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February 10 WORLD BUDGET/ADVENTIST TELEVISION  
MINISTRIES

*Ignoring the signs.* The town of Ringgold, Georgia, with a population of 3,700, is located near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and sits just about 10 miles from the campus of Southern Adventist University. One of the distinguishing features of this historic place is its old railroad depot at the south end of town, and the underpass next to it on highway US 41. Before the construction of Interstate 75, US 41 was the only road through the area on the way to Dalton, Calhoun, Atlanta, and points south.

The problem was, and is, that the underpass has very low clearance—only 11 feet, 7 inches. Large vehicles, such as semis, cannot pass through. There are warning signs everywhere regarding the detour around it: bright yellow signs, flashing lights, dangling objects, etc. Invariably, two or three times a year a truck driver will ignore or not notice the signage and plow into the bridge. And the result is a heavily damaged truck, a fine of \$10,000, and a blocked roadway for several hours while the mess is being cleaned up!

Our Adventist Television Ministries—It Is Written, Breath of Life, and Faith for Today—do a wonderful job of broadcasting the signs to a largely unwarned world, and they deserve our faithful support. Please uphold these ministries in your prayers, and plan to give a generous offering today.

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February 17

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*A budget.* Yes, your church has a budget! But the question now comes, “Do you and I have a budget?”

It is a matter of great personal benefit to be careful about our finances, and a budget can be very helpful in making that happen. If you have not yet discovered this principle, perhaps a pastor or other financial counselor can help. We know that God is interested in our personal prosperity, and has counseled us in Scripture to that effect.

Was Jesus careful about such matters? The Desire of Ages reports to us as follows: “They [Peter and John] saw the shroud and the napkin, but they did not find their Lord.... The grave clothes were not thrown heedlessly aside, but carefully folded, each in a place by itself.... It was Christ Himself who had placed those grave clothes with such care” (p. 789).

If Jesus was careful about even His grave clothes, then we imagine that that carried over into the rest of His life, including being a careful worker in His father’s carpenter shop.

Whether it’s our finances, possessions, relationships, health, or time, let’s be faithful stewards in all that we do. And God will bless. He always does!

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February 24  
PARTNERS

MICHIGAN ADVANCE

*Renovations needed.* Recently the Estey Church received MAP funds to renovate their building. The block walls of the building were being held together by steel cables. The roof was leaking in several spots and many of the windows had been shot out by vandalizers.

Estey is a country church and there would be no way that members could afford to pay for all the renovation costs. However, thanks to MAP and its generous donors they are getting a new roof, siding, windows, and even putting in a much need baptismal tank. Thanks to MAP the light in Estey will continue to shine and the doors will remain open.

We are one family. Whether you attend a large city church or a small country church, MAP funds are there to help those who get in a pinch, or just can't afford to make the repairs or renovations.

Please consider giving generously to MAP as you may be saving a light in the community.

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March 3

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Poverty is a relative thing.* Never had the people on the short-term mission seen such poverty in their lives! Conditions in a certain Caribbean city were bad enough, but out in the sugar plantations were thousands of lean-to wooden shacks row on row, often no more than three feet apart, inhabited by large families of immigrant workers, chickens, flies, and filth. They were so moved by the scene that most of them ended up leaving almost all of their material possessions behind when it was time to return home.

Jesus was well acquainted with poverty. The Bible makes an interesting statement about this: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9, NKJV).

Poverty is a relative thing. Most of the “poor” of North America are far wealthier than the poor seen elsewhere. Some are victims of technology, their jobs rendered obsolete by a machine. Others have lost work due to a recession. There are those who make little or no effort to better their situation. And then there are those who are poor due to bad money management and unhealthy lifestyles. You can see them at the grocery checkout, their carts loaded with beer and sodas, cigarettes, candy, and junk food.

Jesus can help us avoid unhealthy lifestyles. Good stewardship of our homes and bodies will redound in personal prosperity as well as the prosperity of God’s work.

March 3

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Poverty is a relative thing.* Never had the people on the short-term mission seen such poverty in their lives! Conditions in a certain Caribbean city were bad enough, but out in the sugar plantations were thousands of lean-to wooden shacks row on row, often no more than three feet apart, inhabited by large families of immigrant workers, chickens, flies, and filth. They were so moved by the scene that most of them ended up leaving almost all of their material possessions behind when it was time to return home.

Jesus was well acquainted with poverty. The Bible makes an interesting statement about this: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9, NKJV).

Poverty is a relative thing. Most of the “poor” of North America are far wealthier than the poor seen elsewhere. Some are victims of technology, their jobs rendered obsolete by a machine. Others have lost work due to a recession. There are those who make little or no effort to better their situation. And then there are those who are poor due to bad money management and unhealthy lifestyles. You can see them at the grocery checkout, their carts loaded with beer and sodas, cigarettes, candy, and junk food.

Jesus can help us avoid unhealthy lifestyles. Good stewardship of our homes and bodies will redound in personal prosperity as well as the prosperity of God’s work.

March 10 WORLD BUDGET / ADVENTIST WORLD RADIO

*The miracle of shortwave broadcasting.* Pastor James Hoffer well remembers his first radio contact as a young intern in southeastern Ohio in 1964, having just received his FCC amateur radio license. A signal he sent out with his transmitter over a bare wire up in the trees reached all the way to Chattanooga, Tennessee; in his receiver, he heard a gentleman responding to his call in Morse code. It seemed truly miraculous. As his adroitness increased, it became common to talk with others as far away as Australia or the South Pole, right from his home.

Two-way conversations using shortwave frequencies are well known among “ham operators.” But the miracle lies in the fact that shortwave transmissions can travel around the globe, bouncing back to earth from energy fields in the ionosphere. A message sent forth in this manner knows no international boundaries. It is “out there” for all to hear, regardless of local politics or religions, if they have the right kind of receivers.

Adventist World Radio has been employing this phenomenon for years now and has met with huge success, as attested to by the correspondence it receives from faraway places. And nowadays, of course, AWR is using many digital means, such as Internet, to enlarge their broadcast ministry. They deserve our solid support.

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March 17

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*St. Patrick's Day.* Today is St. Patrick's Day, and much of the Christian world will celebrate it with parades and other festivities. Though we may not resonate with this holiday in the same way as others, perhaps we can at least reflect on the fact that Patrick brought Christianity to the Irish in those primitive times. History records that at the age of sixteen he was captured by Irish raiders and sent to Ireland as a slave. However, during the six years of his exile he found the Lord, and eventually became a missionary to the people there. God certainly knows how to bring good out of evil.

We are deeply indebted to early missionaries like Patrick who brought the true gospel, possibly including the Sabbath truth, to the pagans of his day. Today we are challenged to pick up the torch of truth and bear it proudly throughout our generation, passing it on to the next. And that includes sharing our faith with others verbally, through literature, and through our means, so that God's work may go forward mightily.

"Local church budget" may be a rather vague term to some, so let's flesh it out a bit. It is far more than just paying for light and heat and air conditioning. It has to do with all of those important components that enter into the ministry of our local church. Children's ministries, youth ministries, and many other ministries all benefit from what we are giving today.

So let us contribute generously today to God's work in this our area of His vineyard.

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March 24

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*A place to host church and school events.* The gymnasium of the Mt Pleasant SDA Church was built in the late 1980's with the assistance of MAP funds. Unfortunately the first structure burned down before its completion. Work crews arrived to find the building gone. It was covered by insurance and was re-built.

Today the gym serves as a multi-purpose facility for the church and school. During the week it is used by the school for recreational and physical activity purposes. Weekends it hosts weekly fellowship dinners, wedding receptions, wedding and baby showers, and church fun nights for volleyball, social activities, etc.

Without this building the activities of the school and church would be severely compromised. It provides a recreational space for the school during the cold Michigan winters. Our educational paradigm of the mental, spiritual, and physical being could not be fully implemented without the proper facilities. This structure provides more and better opportunities to develop the physical mandate.

Our school is very fortunate to have a gym and appreciates the opportunities it provides. The church is also fortunate to have this facility for the advancement of its educational ministry and mission. Thank you MAP.

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*Atheist?* Recently, a young atheist with little Christian background was battling multiple addictions at a State University. He felt empty his whole life. His parents divorced in high school. His father abandoned the family, and his mother had barely survived a suicide attempt. At every turn, despair seemed to overtake any attempt to escape. With his life hanging by a thread, he decided to study the Bible to prove God was a myth before committing suicide. With an old Bible his grandmother gave him and a set of Bible studies in hand, just like those we are using for [BibleStudyOffer.com](http://BibleStudyOffer.com), he went to work on his mission to dismantle God.

After several lessons, he knelt with tears in his eyes and gave His heart and life to Christ. The Christ who he once defied had now changed his life through His incredible love. The truth made his life whole. Today, he is a pastor who is leading many others to Christ.

Why do we do missionary work like compassion projects, health ministry, Bible Study Offer, Unlock Revelation, and other outreaches? This young man is why, and there are thousands more like him across Michigan and dozens in your town who are searching for something more than this world offers. Your offering today will support more local church and GROW MICHIGAN efforts to help these precious souls find the Christ who will set them free. Prayerfully consider systematic giving to both local and conference evangelism to bring God's people home.

Zechariah 3:2 "And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?"

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April 7

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Deadbeats.* Now there's a negative word for you! What on earth is a deadbeat? The dictionary defines a deadbeat as someone who persistently fails to pay personal debts or expenses. God forbid that a Christian should ever be guilty of that!

A local funeral director recently confided to a friend that hundreds of his clients over the years have never paid a dime for their loved one's funeral. Of course, what can he do to collect?

Some of this comes about because of circumstances of poverty. He is proud of those who, even though they will probably never be able to pay back entirely, nevertheless show up at the funeral home weekly or monthly with a modest amount of money, thus demonstrating good faith and diligence.

It's not only sad when people take advantage of businesses this way, but it's downright dishonest.

One of the nicest lessons that the tithing plan teaches us is honesty, and that is a trait that seems to be in short supply in our society. Everywhere you go people are taking advantage of other people.

Someday there will be final "audit," and the truth about our honesty or lack of it will be made plain. Choose now to be honest before both God and humans, and He will bless you abundantly.

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*“You have blood in your eye.”* This one phrase signaled a significant life change for Leanora Ruff. Poised to re-enter the workforce after acquiring her doctoral degree, Leanora was stunned by the comment. A glance in the mirror confirmed it. But what did that mean? In Leanora’s case, it meant retinal detachment. First, it happened in her right eye. One year later, it occurred again in her left eye. “I was devastated,” she said.

A church friend, upon discovering Leanora’s eye problems, asked her a simple question, “Have you contacted Christian Record Services?” This friend knew that the resources and programs from Christian Record Services would be helpful to Leanora as she adapted to life with limited vision.

The gifts you give today through the World Budget offering provide services such as Bible study courses, Sabbath School lessons, magazines, library books, and more—including adventures in nature through National Camps for Blind Children.

Leanora offers this encouragement to each church member: “Your donations, small or large, will be impactful and will be influential in getting the services of Christian Record Services to many individuals. . . I encourage you to make a contribution. It will multiply like you’ve never seen it multiply before.”

Thank you for remembering Christian Record Services as you make your World Budget offering today.

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April 21

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*Enthusiasm for God's work.* Several years ago, a pastor came to a church that was heavily in debt over a building program. What to do? The church was barely meeting its monthly mortgage payment to the conference revolving fund, and some months not meeting it at all. Watch now what happened and how the dynamics changed.

An Adventist financial consultant was contacted to help get over this hump. And he required further expenditures to get the campaign going—several thousands of dollars. Would the church buy into this plan? Well, think of this now from a business standpoint. Business people know that you must spend money in order to make money. A brand-new business cannot make even its first dollar until there is expenditure for office space, furniture and equipment, advertising, raw materials, and such. Sometimes a church needs to think like a business.

The pastor had to sell the idea to the church that an expenditure of \$40,000 would be needed in order to pay off the debt of nearly \$800,000. He posed a question to the church board and later to the church in business session: “Would you spend \$40 to make \$800?” Of course. Proportionately, that’s what would be taking place. The church voted to go ahead, and with God’s blessing the debt was entirely paid off in five years.

But that’s not the best part. During those five years, tithe and offerings for all the other funds were up as well! How do you explain it? Enthusiasm for God’s work!

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April 28

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Well used door.* The Port Huron Blue Water Church moved out of Port Huron and into the city of Marysville after building a new church facility in 1977. Over the last 40 years, the exterior doors have certainly felt the impact of Michigan's ever-changing weather. Those doors have endured heavy snow fall, icy conditions, salt, sub-zero temperatures, heavy rains, humid summer heat, and the list could go on. With the continual changing of seasons and varying degrees of weather, those wooden, exterior doors have done what any wood door would do in those situations—fall apart.

Seeing that the doors were in desperate need of replacement, the church went to work finding a contractor who could replace those old wooden doors with new fiberglass or steel doors that would last much longer. However, the church quickly found out that replacing exterior doors on a commercial building can get rather expensive. After getting quotes ranging from \$8,000 to \$20,000, the church decided to ask Michigan Advanced Partners (MAP) for financial assistance. And praise the Lord, MAP was willing to help out the Port Huron Blue Water Church with \$4,000.

This is a huge blessing for a small church such as Blue Water, and the members are thrilled to have the old doors finally replaced. Without MAP, it would have been financially difficult to accomplish this project. Praise God there are faithful people willing to donate to ministries such as MAP, so that churches keep their facilities properly maintained for the honor and glory of God.

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*The Hebrew economy.* Ellen White uses this interesting term several times in her writings, and it is worth looking into. First, we generally use the word “economy” in terms of finance; however, here we are seeing a much broader usage. The dictionary reveals that it goes back to two Greek words: oikos, meaning house or household, and nomos, meaning rule or law. The oikonomos was the manager of a given household.

The church is a household, and we are members of its family. Each of us, great or small, plays an important role in the overall health of the church household. We are called to diligent and faithful service.

The Hebrew economy, in its ideal form, was an awesome model for the rest of the world of its day. Notice: “During the days of Moses, the government of Israel was characterized by the most thorough organization, wonderful alike for its completeness and its simplicity. The order so strikingly displayed in the perfection and arrangement of all God’s created works was manifest in the Hebrew economy. God was the center of authority and government, the sovereign of Israel” (*Review and Herald*, October 12, 1905).

“The work of the gospel, as it widens, requires greater provision to sustain it than was called for anciently; and this makes the law of tithes and offerings of even more urgent necessity now than under the Hebrew economy” (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 529).

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May 12 WORLD BUDGET / DISASTER & FAMINE RELIEF

*Greed.* Nurse Vera was working in the oncology ward of a large hospital in Michigan. She was a very empathetic and caring person, and the patients loved her. One patient in particular, who seemed at one point to be headed downhill, rallied and improved sufficiently to be able to return home. What a nasty surprise awaited her. While she was in the hospital, her greedy children, thinking that she was never going to return, had completely cleaned out her apartment, furniture and all. She opened the door and saw absolutely nothing. Naturally she was devastated. Can you imagine such awful selfishness?

Greed is a terrible thing, and the world is full of it. No one likes to be around a greedy, grasping person. The opposite, of course, is generosity. How we love people who are large-hearted and generous! They reflect God's character of generosity and are a blessing to all.

Do you aspire to be a generous person, more concerned about the needs of others than your own needs? Then follow the example of Jesus. See Him lift up the downcast and heal the afflicted. Watch Him feed 5,000 and even raise the dead. Jesus is exhibit A of a totally unselfish person. Oh, how I want to be like Him!

Of course, that's what stewardship is all about. God entrusts us with means for the sustenance of our families and those around us, as well as for His wonderful soul-winning work.

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*Independent ministries.* Our denomination is blessed with many causes and entities which fall outside of direct denominational ownership. In the Adventist world, with a strong desire to spread our message, many individuals have felt a burden to reach out in unique ways, whether through health ministries or mission outreach or other methods. How shall we respond to the many appeals for funds while keeping things in balance?

Here are some recognized characteristics of those we would consider “supporting” ministries, rather than “competing” ministries:

They work very closely with conference and local leadership.

They provide needed services that the denomination itself does not provide, such as building churches.

They have current denominational officials as full voting members on their boards.

They are openly loyal to, rather than in competition with, the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

They do not encourage or knowingly receive tithe from their supporters.

Let’s be faithful givers, bringing our tithes and offerings first of all into God’s storehouse, His church, while not neglecting other valid appeals for special needs and causes.

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May 26

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Grand Rapids Adventist Academy (GRAA).* We are the Grand Rapids Adventist Academy and we are so very grateful for the support from the conference, MAP, and the union.

We are a very close-knit family and we serve a great community. We are very proud to be a very diverse community; we have a nice representation of different countries.

Although we love our students, we are also facing financial difficulties in helping these students who really want to be at GRAA. We have more students that would love to attend; however, because of finances can not. It would be great if we could help other students attend GRAA.

I have had the honor to be the board chair for a couple of years and have just been asked to serve for another two years. My oldest daughter graduated in 2011, she attended from kindergarten all the way through her senior year. I also have a seventh-grader who has also attended GRAA since kindergarten.

We love our school and are grateful to those who systematically give to MAP so that all children who want to get a Christian education will be able to attend.

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June 2

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Our wonderful church treasurers.* A number of years ago, a pastor, a bit late for an appointment, was frustrated because he happened to find himself on a busy two-lane highway right behind a slow-moving car driven by an elderly lady. After several minutes, he finally saw his opportunity to pass, so he “put his pedal to the metal,” as they say, and annoyingly zoomed past the slow car. Pulling back to the right, he glanced in the mirror, only to discover that that lady was his church treasurer. Oops!

Our church treasurers are valuable. The vast majority are hard-working, conscientious, and meticulous as they labor with the numbers, present reports to church boards, and pay the bills. In some cases, when giving is in decline, they even take from their own pockets to meet the demands.

Of course, we are all just fallible people, and on very rare occasions mishaps occur, whether at the local level or higher. The Adventist system is well protected for this, with auditing and other checks and balances. And that is the reason for our periodic nominating committees and constituency meetings. As we sit as delegates listening to the reports of the various departments, we can be bored or we can rejoice in the progress of God’s work. These meetings hold our leaders (people just like us) to accountability.

Today’s offering is for the local church budget. Let us continue to be faithful givers, and have confidence in those we have chosen to direct the work.

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## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Our wonderful church treasurers.* A number of years ago, a pastor, a bit late for an appointment, was frustrated because he happened to find himself on a busy two-lane highway right behind a slow-moving car driven by an elderly lady. After several minutes, he finally saw his opportunity to pass, so he “put his pedal to the metal,” as they say, and annoyingly zoomed past the slow car. Pulling back to the right, he glanced in the mirror, only to discover that that lady was his church treasurer. Oops!

Our church treasurers are valuable. The vast majority is hard-working, conscientious, and meticulous as they labor with the numbers, present reports to church boards, and pay the bills. In some cases, when giving is in decline, they even take from their own pockets to meet the demands.

Of course, we are all just fallible people, and on very rare occasions mishaps occur, whether at the local level or higher. The Adventist system is well protected for this, with auditing and other checks and balances. And that is the reason for our periodic nominating committees and constituency meetings. As we sit as delegates listening to the reports of the various departments, we can be bored or we can rejoice in the progress of God’s work. These meetings hold our leaders (people just like us) to accountability.

Today’s offering is for the local church budget. Let us continue to be faithful givers, and have confidence in those we have chosen to direct the work.

*What is prosperity?* Consider the following verse of Scripture: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (3 John 2, KJV).

Overseas workers, when learning a new language, may also need to learn new ways of doing things. For example, in many Latin countries when you write a business letter, you never jump right into the subject at hand like we do in the States. On the contrary, even if the addressee is unknown to you, you will start with something like “Dear Brother So-and-so: I trust that this letter finds you in good health and enjoying the blessings of the Lord.” Only then do you broach the subject.

Our letters seem too forward and rude to them; theirs seem too flowery to us. Almost all of the epistles begin with at least one verse of salutation, sometimes three or four. And guess what—they sign their name at the top of the letter instead of the bottom. The reader would not need to completely unroll the scroll to know who it came from.

But what really is prosperity? We often think of it in monetary or material terms. Prosperity in the Christian sense would be a wonderful knowledge of well-being in the Lord, knowing that your sins are forgiven and you are secure in Christ, and that your future is in His hands. That is prosperity that money can’t buy!

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June 16

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Two seas, two results.* Well, they are really just large lakes, but down through the years they have been called seas: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. They are both found in the land of Israel, and they both illustrate the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy Christian.

The Sea of Galilee is a fresh body of water, because the Jordan River flows through it from north to south. The constant flow of the river keeps the waters of Galilee alive with fish and other creatures. On the other hand, the Dead Sea receives water from the Jordan, but has no outlet. Its waters stagnate and largely evaporate in the arid Israeli south, and nothing can live in it due to the lack of oxygen and extremely high saline condition.

Business people speak of a phenomenon known as “cash flow.” Institutions, entities, and even churches depend on cash flow to survive. And so do people. You receive, but then you must spend to obtain the resources necessary for life, first of all taking out the Lord’s part. And so goes the cycle.

The Dead Sea is truly dead because there is no throughput. So-called “Christians” who have no throughput are dead. Only by constantly receiving and giving may we continue to be healthy Christians, receiving of the Lord, and then empowered by Him to be a blessing to others.

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June 23

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Special projects.* What do you do when you have a special project, but don't have the funds needed to complete the project? The Tecumseh Church faced that issue. A request was submitted to the Lay Advisory Committee asking for assistance. Their request was approved!

The project was to purchase a new projector that would allow them to Live Stream many programs and videos. The total cost of the projector is approximately \$6,000. Their old system is antiquated and doesn't always work. The church had saved \$2,200, and with the \$2,000 from MAP they are still short of their goal. But that does not damper their spirits.

They were so excited to receive MAP funds, and are so grateful for the generosity of all those who give to help all churches in need of funds for special projects.

Thank you for your part of donating to MAP to provide assistance to other churches, schools, students, Evangelism, Camp Au Sable, and Camp Meeting. May God bless you all for being a Michigan Advance Partner. To God be the glory!

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June 30

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE EVANGELISM

*Dr. Louis Evens* visited a mission station in a remote, primitive Korean village. A physician friend invited him to witness an operation involving major surgery in a make shift tent. For hours the steady, calm surgeon worked on an old peasant woman in extreme heat. After seven hours the doctor stood up and sighed, “Well, the job is done, Lou. She will make it.”

They returned to the modest office where Dr. Evans asked, “I am curious how much you get paid out here for an operation like this one?” The godly surgeon replied, “To begin with I get this,” and he picked up a dented copper coin. “This poor old woman came into my office some time ago with this old coin and asked, ‘Doctor, do you suppose this would pay for my operation?’” I responded, “It just so happens that it is just enough. In this, I get unspeakable joy.”

Sitting down with tears filling his eyes, the dedicated missionary added, “But most of all Lou, I have the ‘priceless experience’ that for seven hours these hands become the hands of Jesus healing one of his needy children.” When we lovingly minister to those in need, we too have the “priceless experience” that Jesus is working through us to minister to His people.

We are ambassadors for Christ. Jesus sees through our eyes, listens through our ears, and speaks through our voice as we witness for Him. He loves through our heart when we touch others.

Let’s commit our lives, tithe, and offerings today to sharing Christ with people we meet through compassion, kindness, Glow Tracts, Bible Studies, and every possible way.

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July 7

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*David's decision.* Listen to this portion of a Bible story from the life of King David: “Then the angel of the LORD told Gad to instruct David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David went up to do what the LORD had commanded him.... When Araunah saw David approaching, he left his threshing floor and bowed before David with his face to the ground. David said to Araunah, ‘Let me buy this threshing floor from you at its full price. Then I will build an altar to the LORD there, so that he will stop the plague.’ ‘Take it, my lord the king, and use it as you wish,’ Araunah said to David.

‘I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, and the threshing boards for wood to build a fire on the altar, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give it all to you.’ But King David replied to Araunah, ‘No, I insist on buying it for the full price. I will not take what is yours and give it to the LORD. I will not present burnt offerings that have cost me nothing!’” (1 Chron. 21:18–24, NLT, emphasis ours).

How much of our offerings cost us relatively little or nothing? We place a dollar or two in the offering plate and think we have done God a great service. Let’s give sacrificially this morning.

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July 14 NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION (*EMPHASIS: WOMEN'S MINISTRIES\**)

*Daily bread, a team of horses, and forty years.* Shirley Ann Munroe tells the following story: “In 1938 my father died from a ruptured appendix. One of his business associates cheated my mother out of our inheritance. To support her family, my mother had to return to college to become certified to teach school in California.

“Some friends had actually suggested to Mother that it wasn’t necessary for her to tithe in our difficult situation, an idea she quickly rejected.

“We moved to the city of my mother’s new teaching job. By the time we had paid the movers and the first month’s rent, we were completely out of money. The school system wouldn’t issue my mother’s first paycheck until October 1. That meant that we would be without any money for a whole month. We knew no one in the city. Where could we turn for help?

“We knelt to pray for bread and placed our problem before the Lord. About an hour later, the doorbell rang. It was a postal worker with a special delivery letter that had been forwarded from our old address. It contained a check for \$240. The letter explained that forty years earlier my mother’s grandfather had underwritten a team of horses for a farmer who had never repaid the debt. The farmer had died and his son had found the unpaid promissory note. And he added forty years of interest to the amount owed.”—Adapted from *Over and Over Again!*, p. 40.

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July 21

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Ownership.* Ownership is an interesting word. We talk about things we own, such as a car or a house. But do we really own those things?

A couple went to a dealership to buy a car. As they were signing the papers for the financing, the sales person surprisingly said, “You know, people don’t really own cars. They just rent them.” If you think about it, that’s true, especially of cars. Often by the time we reach the last payment, the car is worn out and needs to be replaced, and we start the “rental” process all over again.

And what about our homes? It is true that houses tend to increase in value as the years roll by. And we enjoy building up equity. But guess what? If the state or federal government decides to build a road that crosses through your property, you are most likely going to lose your home. So who really owns the land? Sure, they will compensate you for your loss, but there you are, starting all over again.

The Lord says, “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10, NKJV). Not only that, but a few verses prior He challenges us in this fashion: “Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice” (v. 5).

So who really owns our cars, our homes, and everything else? Let’s make a covenant by sacrifice today, and show it by the way we support His work.

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July 28

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Michigan Advance Partners* is one of the greatest ways to support both your local church as well as mission work across Michigan.

MAP allows schools, churches, community service centers, and more to be repaired and newly built to become lighthouses of truth in hundreds of communities. It supports the spreading of the gospel through Personal Ministries and Evangelism in places that wouldn't otherwise be able to be reached. It supports humanitarian projects that assist people in need when crisis strikes. It is one of the most effective means of outreach we have as a Conference.

When God moves on our hearts to see His work finished, His love compels us to put His cause as the #1 priority in our lives. This often calls for self denial and self sacrifice of our comfort and pleasure to find joy in His work that is greater than ourselves. In every area of life, let us be surrendered to the will of God through accepting Him fully, knowing Him intimately, praying for His church continually, returning our tithe and offerings faithfully, and becoming involved in leading souls to Christ personally.

This will bring revival to our hearts, joy to our life, and friends to God's kingdom for eternity. It will bring transformation to our local church. It will bring a blessing from heaven upon our lives.

We should ever keep our thoughts focused on how joyous it will be to visit with the countless souls in God's kingdom who will be there because of God using each of us here on earth through every means possible to bring them home to Christ. Let's become honest and faithful partners with God today, including MAP.

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August 4

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Little people but a big example.* When Jesus was here on earth, He went about doing good, preaching good news, healing the sick, and ministering to people's needs. God created us to give, share, and help others. We have found that when we do something for others, we are blessed personally.

After retirement from a family business of three generations, Baehm Paper Co., George and Tena Baehm wanted to find someplace where they could give of themselves in witnessing and helping others.

Both George and Tena are dwarfs. George is 4 feet tall and Tena 3 feet 9 inches tall. In their own words: "We felt our stature had no bearing on what we could do since we were successful in our business, where we worked many years.

"In 1994, we became involved with Maranatha Volunteers International. Our first project was in Bariloche, Argentina, with 96 volunteers from all over the world. After two days of working on the site, building youth cabins, we said, 'This is thrilling. There's nothing else like it.'

"Our gift may be talents, opportunities, or wealth. It may be nothing more than the ability to share ourselves. That too is stewardship."— Adapted from *Over and Over Again!*, p. 62.

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August 11 WORLD BUDGET: OAKWOOD / ANDREWS /  
LOMA LINDA

*The bumblebee.* It has been said that aerodynamically the bumblebee should not be able to fly at all, since his body is large and heavy and his wings so small. Nevertheless, not having read those dismal reports, the bumblebee goes ahead and flies anyway!

And today, as we feature three of our prominent universities, we stand in awe at “what God hath wrought.” For a denomination of our size should not be able to have such a powerful influence in the world as we do through these very special entities. But we do, and it is a direct result of the faithfulness and dedication of our people. This, of course, is also reflected in our worldwide system of medical and educational institutions, as well as publishing houses and numerous other ministries. It all comes about because for years we have had a strong emphasis on faithfulness in tithing and other giving.

We can be justly proud of what the Lord has accomplished through us, and at the same time be challenged to move forward steadily as we see the Day of the Lord approaching.

Let us then not only give to assist the educational work carried forward around us, but also strive to be shining lights wherever God has placed us, through consistency in tithes and offerings and in other forms of service to the cause of God.

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August 18

CHURCH BUDGET

*Participatory worship.* Occasionally someone will call for the offering with these words: “We have now come to the place in the service where all of us can take part.” That represents a misunderstanding of the concept of worship.

Worship is by nature participatory, and active rather than passive. It is not meant to be merely a “spectator sport.” If we come to church with our hearts properly tuned to hear God’s voice, we should be able to perceive Him in all of the hymns, prayers, special music, sermons, and any other part of the service. And, yes, in the offering as well.

It is certainly possible for our minds to drift, and that probably happens to all of us at one time or another. But we need to focus our attention and pray that God will help us hear His voice in everything. “Worship” is related to the word “worth.” True worship occurs when we lift up the Lord in praise and thanksgiving, offering ourselves to Him in devotion and service, and devoiding ourselves of our innate pride and selfishness.

Yes, worship the Lord in tithes and offerings today, but also in every part of the divine service.

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August 25

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

*Teamwork.* That's what has made it possible for a special young lady to attend Great Lakes Adventist Academy (GLAA).

Last year, the church where she lived saw potential in her and rallied to make it possible for her to enroll at GLAA. Even though she has very little financial help from her family, and comes from a very inconsistent, non-Christian home, she jumped at the chance to go to a boarding school, little realizing the impact it would make on her life. She grew spiritually by leaps and bounds her first year and was baptized at the end of the year as a member of the local church.

During the summer she shared her faith door to door in the Magabook program, earning money for her tuition. This year she is involved in the music program again, is a class officer, and shares her faith with her friends on campus. Her older sister now looks up to her, and her family comments often about what a changed person she is.

What helped make all this possible? MAP funds and the three-way matching program called Project Assist. It's people like you who give to MAP that make these stories happen. There are many students at GLAA because of your consistent gifts to MAP.

Thank you on behalf of all those who are given the chance to attend GLAA and get to know Jesus and grow in Him. Thank you for supporting God's mission for young people at our school!

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September 1

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Labor Day.* Well, here we are at Labor Day Weekend, which is dedicated to affirming our nation's workers and considered to be the unofficial end of the summer season.

Ellen White affirmed the dignity of honest labor. She wrote: "Jesus came to this earth to accomplish the greatest work ever accomplished among men. He came as God's ambassador, to show us how to live so as to secure life's best results. What were the conditions chosen by the Infinite Father for His Son? A secluded home in the Galilean hills; a household sustained by honest, self-respecting labor; a life of simplicity; daily conflict with difficulty and hardship; self-sacrifice, economy, and patient, gladsome service; the hour of study at His mother's side, with the open scroll of Scripture; the quiet of dawn or twilight in the green valley; the holy ministries of nature; the study of creation and providence; and the soul's communion with God—these were the conditions and opportunities of the early life of Jesus" (The Adventist Home, p. 132).

Wow! What an ideal situation! And what an example for us! Can you picture Jesus in the carpenter shop this morning, carefully crafting this or that object of wood?

And so as we honor the laborers of our land, whether manual or mental labor, let us honor God's work by our faithfulness in tithes and offerings.

September 1

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Labor Day.* Well, here we are at Labor Day Weekend, which is dedicated to affirming our nation's workers and considered to be the unofficial end of the summer season.

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September 8    WORLD BUDGET / FALL MISSION APPEAL

*Mission giving.* It is no secret that our giving to missions has fallen off decidedly since the early days of our denomination. And that is a shame. Who of the older ones of us cannot remember the legendary stories of our missionary pioneers— the Stahls, the Hares, and hundreds of others like them? And what about Pitcairn Island and other exotic lands? Many of us still have books on our library shelves that contain stories of their wonderful mission exploits.

It is not surprising that a special day of emphasis has been established. It needs emphasizing, for sure.

It would be well if each of us were to take a renewed look at our own approach to mission giving. Our tithe envelopes actually suggest a percentage of income to designate for missions. Rather than a dollar or two in the Sabbath School envelope, a more intentional approach would be to set aside a nice offering each month or week and include it along with our tithe and other offerings.

We would be remiss if we failed to honor those other ministries that have stepped into the gap in sending missionaries or sponsoring mission trips. While it is appropriate to support them as well, let's put our main emphasis on the worldwide work. Today is a good day to start a new beginning with a generous offering for the Fall Mission Appeal.

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September 15

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*The trucker.* A retired missionary related the following story: “Many years ago I served as a departmental secretary in one of our mission conferences in southern Brazil. On one of my trips out from the office, I pulled into a truck stop to get gas for my car. As I went inside to pay, I stood in line behind a trucker and overheard the cashier say to him, ‘How much do you want me to write on your receipt?’ I was very puzzled at this until I figured out what was happening. Both were conspiring in a scheme to rip off the truck driver’s company. The cashier would inflate the receipt, they would probably divide up the difference, and when the driver returned to his base he would turn in the receipt for reimbursement and pocket the rest.”

There is no telling how much deceit and dishonesty there is out in the world. Cheating on our taxes, earning money “under the table,” falsifying records—the list goes on and on.

If nothing else, God’s tithing system teaches us to be honest in keeping accurate records of our finances.

On the plus side, it is a wonderful thing not only to be honest, but to be generous. Using our blessings to benefit God’s work, and assisting the needy with our talents, time, and resources, helps us to sleep sweetly at night. It’s a foretaste of His kingdom, which will be filled with unselfish and true-hearted people.

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September 22

## MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

In 2016 our church was facing the end of our 48 year old boiler that had been fixed and fixed and limped along for several years and the experts were telling us there isn't anything left saving. Our building committee had been meeting, getting quotes, and realizing we were coming up short for the boiler replacement recommended for our church. Using Nehemiah's story from the bible to guide us, we stepped out in faith and put together what we had, made an appeal for MAP Funds and began the project as a portion of the monies were there. Much prayer went into this process and every step of the way we met and prayed.

Since the project was being done in the winter, we had to close our church for two Sabbaths and worship with our sister church. By the time the project was finished due to the generous MAP Funds we received, the local congregation's offerings, the Seventh-day Adventist Heating and Cooling man who installed the boiler and gave us a good deal for his work, and a nice rebate for installing an energy efficient heating system, we were up and running within two weeks and able to pay the bill.

Instead of a huge broken down boiler in a small boiler room making it hard to maneuver, we now have a very state of the art, energy efficient boiler and water heater with room to walk in and access the different parts with ease. These are the kind of things the MAP Funds is for. We never realized it until we had an emergency but with everyone's contributing into MAP, a little goes a long way. It was just enough to give us a much needed hand up and we are extremely grateful to all who contribute to MAP each month. We encourage everyone to give what they can to MAP and help other struggling churches as we were helped.

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September 29

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE EVANGELISM

*Evangelistic methods.* A woman once asked a pastor, “What are the best evangelistic methods?” He responded, “The ones you do. The ones you don’t do are really ineffective.”

Some criticize Biblical methods of evangelism, because they haven’t personally done any to witness the joy it brings to the life of both the sharer and receiver. Dwight Moody tells about an English teacher who after one of his sermons commented, “Mr. Moody do you know that you made thirty-nine grammatical errors in your sermon tonight.”

Moody replied, “Ma’am, I am using all of the grammar I know to win souls to Christ. What are you doing with the grammar you know?”

This is not to imply that we should accept thoughtless plans or careless work. It does imply that when you do what you can, God will do what you can’t.

If you want to see God work miracles, get off the sidelines and into the trenches. You may have the very best plans on paper, but they are useless until you implement them under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If you want to have a closer walk with God, let Him use you to give a Bible Study, conduct a small group, do health or family life ministry, distribute literature, become a spiritual mentor, conduct an evangelistic meeting, or other outreach.

Pray and ask God what He wants to do in you and through you. That will put a smile on His face! Your offering today will provide resources to help accomplish His purpose in you, and your local church. Let’s Grow Michigan and God’s kingdom!

Proverbs 11:30 “He who wins souls is wise.”

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October 6

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*God's faithfulness.* Pastor Dennis Childers tells the following story: "A few months after my wife and I were married, I quit my steady job as a security guard and went to work for Rose Hills Cemetery in Whittier, California. I worked in the sales department, and my income was based on commission. Sales of any kind can be difficult, but selling cemetery property is extremely difficult!

"About the time I went to work for Rose Hills, my wife was laid off from her steady job, and we found ourselves in the middle of a worker's comp case for the next two years. My wife received a small compensation each month during this case, but I was hardly making any sales.

"One month we had \$500 in the bank, and our \$500 rent was almost due. I contemplated holding back the tithe from my wife's small check until things got better for us. But then a thought came to me, 'If I did this, it would become easy to continue this practice in the future, and the tithe that we owed God would snowball to such a point that we could never make it up.'

"That Sabbath, I gave back to God what was rightfully His. . . and that following week I made a sale. God was truly faithful to my wife and me, as we stepped out in faith and were faithful to Him. He will always be faithful!" – Adapted from Southern Tidings, May 2016, used by permission of the Southern Union Conference.

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October 13    WORLD BUDGET / VOICE OF PROPHECY /  
LA VOZ DE LA ESPERANZA

*The faith project.* Anthony and Nayeli Nix are members of the Collegedale Spanish-American Church in Tennessee. Their church is bulging with members, and it recently started a campaign to enlarge the building.

One Sabbath Nayeli was helping in the children's department while Anthony was sitting alone during the church service. Joel Barrios, the church pastor, preached a sermon that appealed to the members to support the campaign in a sacrificial manner.

Anthony and Nayeli always make large financial decisions together. This time, however, rather fearfully and on his own Anthony promised to God that he would contribute approximately 90 percent of his wages for January 2017.

Having made this decision without consulting his wife caused Anthony to be somewhat tense. He rehearsed in his mind how to break the news to Nayeli.

Anthony explained to his wife what he had done, and then invited her to listen to a recording of the sermon. Afterward she affirmed her desire to stand by the decision he had made. Much to their amazement, when he returned to work he found out that his wages were to be increased a considerable amount.

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October 20

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Mission trips.* Some of us have had the privilege of participating in one of the short-term mission projects offered by various entities. It is not only a blessing to the people we serve in places far and near, but for us it becomes a life-changing experience.

Consider the experience of newly-baptized Stephen. Up to this time, he had been a factory worker with no experience in the ministry. But wanting an adventure with God, he joined up with a small mission team headed for the Philippines.

Stephen and his wife handled the nightly family life talks. But one afternoon, the local pastor came by and told them that they were going to do some prison ministries that day.

They got in the van and rode out into the countryside to the local prison. There were probably half a dozen cell blocks, each full of men beyond capacity. Then the pastor said, “Jim, you are going to preach to that cell block; Jason, to this other one; and, Stephen, over there.”

This was done with no forewarning, and Stephen had never preached a day in his life. But he swallowed hard, said a quick prayer, and with Bible in hand preached to nearly thirty prisoners in that cell block. It wasn't long after that that he began to prepare to be a minister himself back in the homeland. Whom God calls, he enables! God doesn't just want our money. He wants our hearts!

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October 27

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

For over a century the St. Charles Church had a dirt and gravel parking lot that would get very muddy during the rainy seasons. Recently the St. Charles Church applied to the Lay Advisory Committee requesting funding from Michigan Advance Partners (MAP) to help pave their parking lot.

Their request was approved! Now with the assistance from MAP, they were able to have the new parking lot installed. The mud is gone and the church has a much nicer curb appeal as well, which makes it more enticing for visitors as well as members to join them.

Without the MAP funds, it would have been a hardship on the small church congregation who are advanced in age and on a limited income.

Please continue to support MAP through your offerings so other churches and schools can have the support they need for larger projects they otherwise could not afford.

Thank you for your generous contribution! Praise the Lord!

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November 3

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Roaches!* Pastor Jim and Vera Hoffer shared that many years ago, when they were newlyweds and Jim was a theology student at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland, they answered an ad to rent a basement apartment from none other than Pastor and Mrs. Eric B. Hare, the famous former missionaries to Burma.

All was well until the Hoffers awoke on their very first morning in the apartment. All of a sudden there was a loud scream from Vera. Jim came running to see what was the matter. The sink was full of roaches crawling everywhere. Then she said to him, “Honey, I just can’t stay here.”

Sadly, they went upstairs to tell Mrs. Hare and request that their deposit be returned. When she heard that, she put her arm around Vera and said these words: “My dear, you will never make a missionary.” Fortunately, she was mistaken. Not many years later the Hoffers went to South America as missionaries.

Satan has many yucky “roaches” that sneak their way into our lives and cause trouble. Some of these “roaches” try to convince us that tithing is not all that important, or that we should use our tithe in other ways or give it to other entities.

How blessed we are, though, when we faithfully follow God’s directives to bring our tithes and offerings into His storehouse, for His remnant church. Your offering today goes toward our local church budget, which allows for us to be a strong presence in our community.

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November 10

WORLD BUDGET / ANNUAL SACRIFICE

*Ten plus 10.* Dale Walters, Associate Professor at Southern Adventist University, tells this story:

“As a small child, I was taught to tithe. Tithing was never a question in my mind. My parents gave me offerings to give for Sabbath School and I put it in the offering plate.

“During my academy and early college years I was impressed that I needed to give offerings, but I wasn’t sure how to go about figuring out what I should do. Paying my own academy and college tuition was a heavy burden, but God provided a good job and I earned enough.

“One year I found out that I was going to get a small raise. I thought—‘I’m living just fine on what I’m making now. I know what I’m going to do. I will give 2% of my gross income for offerings. I won’t miss it at all.’ And I didn’t.

“From then on, when I got a raise I would add a percent or two to my offerings. By the time I finished college, I was paying 10 percent tithe, 5 percent church budget, 3 percent world budget, and 2 percent conference advance. I finished college debt free and with several thousand dollars in the bank. I have continued this plan my whole life even though at times money seemed tight while we raised our family. God has truly blessed just as He said He would.

Today’s offering is for the World Budget/Annual Sacrifice.

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## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*The Old Rugged Cross.* About a half hour's drive from Andrews University, near Pokagon, Michigan, is the First Methodist Episcopal Church. Now standing empty, with a new church just across the way, this small country church remains a monument to the famous hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross." Written by evangelist George Bennard, this beautiful hymn has been considered by many to be the best-known and best-loved Christian hymn.

But its beginnings were very humble. Bennard wrote the first verse in 1912 in Albion, Michigan, as a response to ridicule that he had received at a revival meeting. The song was finished on the last night of meetings at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, at a the Friends Church and was sung as a duet. The completed version was then performed on June 7, 1913, by a choir of five accompanied by a guitar, in Pokagon, Michigan. A plaque outside the church lists their names. (Information courtesy of Wikipedia.)

Great things often have small, inauspicious beginnings. The prophet Zechariah encouraged the rebuilders of the Temple with these words: "Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand" (Zechariah 4:10, NLT).

Today as we give offerings large and small, the Lord looks not at the amount but on the heart of the giver, just as with the poor widow in the Temple.

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November 24

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

Years ago, I had been transferred to a new church. When the evangelist and I arrived to help the intern pastor with the evangelistic meetings, we discovered that it was a brand-new church construction and the parking lot had not been finished. My job was the parking lot greeter. Praise the Lord that we had such a large turnout from the town on opening night that I parked cars on the road.

It was early spring and that year it just poured down rain. The people had to walk through the mud to and from their cars each night. For a small church, it would take years to raise enough money to pave the parking lot.

Now fast forward a few years. Again I was transferred to a new district and what a joy it was to find both churches had brand-new paved parking lots. How did they afford such a thing?

Yes, it required much fund raising and a small loan. However, bigger than that, it was possible because of assistance from Michigan Advance Partners (MAP), which is led by the Lay Advisory Committee.

My family joined the faithful supporters of MAP when we came to Michigan over 22 years ago. We have seen how these funds have gone to our youth camp where our children went each summer, plus to evangelism so we could win souls for the kingdom. It also helps with church roofs, parking lots, and so much more.

Oh, and that muddy parking lot is now paved and 12 people have been baptized as a result of the evangelistic.

If you haven't become a part of this wonderful program, please consider becoming a Michigan Advance Partner!

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MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

Years ago, I had been transferred to a new church. When the evangelist and I arrived to help the intern pastor with the evangelistic meetings, we discovered that it was a brand-new church construction and the parking lot had not been finished. My job was the parking lot greeter. Praise the Lord that we had such a large turnout from the town on opening night that I parked cars on the road.

It was early spring and that year it just poured down rain. The people had to walk through the mud to and from their cars each night. For a small church, it would take years to raise enough money to pave the parking lot.

Now fast forward a few years. Again I was transferred to a new district and what a joy it was to find both churches had brand-new paved parking lots. How did they afford such a thing?

Yes, it required much fund raising and a small loan. However, bigger than that, it was possible because of assistance from Michigan Advance Partners (MAP), which is led by the Lay Advisory Committee.

My family joined the faithful supporters of MAP when we came to Michigan over 22 years ago. We have seen how these funds have gone to our youth camp where our children went each summer, plus to evangelism so we could win souls for the kingdom. It also helps with church roofs, parking lots, and so much more.

Oh, and that muddy parking lot is now paved and 12 people have been baptized as a result of the evangelistic.

If you haven't become a part of this wonderful program, please consider becoming a Michigan Advance Partner!

December 1

## LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*A tax?* Do you regard church tithes and offerings as some kind of “tax” you are obligated to pay? Some do. But that frame of mind robs us of the joy of supporting God’s work and makes it a drudgery to return the Lord’s tithe. Please notice that we said “the Lord’s tithe.” That ten percent already belongs to Him, and retaining it for ourselves is called robbery in the Bible.

Perhaps some of this “tax” idea is a carryover from earlier times. Some churches still tell the story of the days of “pew rent,” where each family was assigned an area of seating and required to pay a rental for that spot. (I guess many of us still feel that we have a “spot” in church that is exclusively ours! How sad it would be to displace someone, especially a visitor, from our so-called “spot!”)

What does it really mean to be a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7)? First of all, we should be cheerful that we have sources of income that sustain us. Second, we should be cheerful that the Lord’s work is well organized and growing, and we have the privilege of supporting it. Third, we should be cheerful that it means that Jesus is coming back soon. We could enumerate many, many more blessings.

No, tithes and offerings are not a tax at all. They are a gift that God places in our hands, a part of which we can return to Him. Why not consider giving a gift today to support our local church and its mission in our community?

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December 8 WORLD BUDGET/NAD ADVENTIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

*The panhandlers.* We see panhandlers frequently, often at a busy intersection, with their cardboard signs. We don't know their names or their histories. We don't know if they will spend the money they receive on food, drugs, or cigarettes. Yet the very sight of them tugs at our hearts, and we wrestle with whether to give or not.

Recently, a pastor had an experience that restored his faith in some of these folks. He had been downsizing his life and taking many of his things to a local flea market. Late one Sunday afternoon, as he was packing up his things, a couple came by and asked if they could help because they were hungry and needed to find lodging for the night. They began to recite a litany of hard luck events. Well, the pastor had heard many such stories, so he stopped their recital but did let them help. They really worked—and worked hard. They carried boxes over to the car and trailer, and even helped put on the tarp and bungees. Evidently this was a worthy case, and he gave them a generous sum. And he even had prayer with them.

As Adventists, we are truly blessed with our community services organizations, as well as our disaster response and relief programs. Our personnel are highly trained to distinguish the truly needy, and we can trust that our support goes a very long way in making a difference in many lives.

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December 15

LOCAL CHURCH BUDGET

*Counting down.* In just a couple of weeks, 2018 will be over and 2019 will come upon the scene. Has it been a good year for you and me? Have we been blessed by God with good health, prosperity, and spiritual growth? Or have times been tough, and maybe even discouraging, for us?

The world in general is filled with misery and woe, and sometimes it even touches us and our loved ones. Regardless of our circumstances, God has told us to focus our hopes on the better land to come. Happy is the Christian who can sing with enthusiasm, “This world is not my home; I’m just a-passing through. My treasure is laid up somewhere beyond the blue.” And whatever our lot in life, all it takes is one trip to a disadvantaged land or to a refugee camp to put things in perspective and realize that we are truly blessed.

As we count down to the end of the year, it is typical for some of us to begin thinking about the upcoming tax season and how we might take stock of our overall financial picture for the year. In certain businesses, such as farming, for example, we don’t really know what we have earned until all the accounts have been reconciled and our true gain or loss has been determined.

Let us then plan to “bring all the tithes into the storehouse” by the year’s end, that the Lord’s house may truly prosper and be blessed.

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December 22

MICHIGAN ADVANCE PARTNERS

When Detroit Northwest purchased the property where their church is located, it was beautiful and comfortable just as it was. Yet, there was something missing. It had a sanctuary, kitchen, fellowship hall, classrooms, office spaces, utility closets, and the like. What the property didn't have was a parking lot.

A beautiful stretch of grass on the north side of the church was there and the members used it to park on Sabbaths. As one can imagine when it would rain or snow that would become messy to say the least. With much prayer they decided to dig up the grass and overlay the area with gravel. This was much better.

However, over the years heavy rains and harsh winters had worn away the viability of gravel. Continuing in prayer the church decided it was time to pave the area. Safety for its members and comfort for visitors and friends led the church to price the job. With money from Michigan Advance Partners (MAP) Detroit Northwest now has a concrete parking lot.

When you give to MAP you help sister churches to build, grow, and improve so that it can be said of all our congregations, "I was glad when they said unto me let us go into the house of the Lord."

Thank you for your continue support of MAP.

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## December 29 MICHIGAN CONFERENCE EVANGELISM

*Public Evangelism* often gets low marks. Many church members believe it is too expensive and too long. Yet, in North America, Public Evangelism is still the most effective outreach! Unlock Revelation has proven that.

Public evangelism is ineffective when it is viewed as an event and not a process. If the only outreach in a local congregation is a yearly prophecy meeting, we should not expect much return. Evangelistic meetings are the harvest phase, yet soil prep, planting, cultivating, and preserving are the other phases that must also be done with harvesting to bring success.

When a local congregation is regularly involved in every part of the cycle through a combination of life enriching outreaches, compassion projects, Bible studies, personal interest of members in neighbors and friends, and systematic discipleship, this builds the community's interest in spiritual things. Then the Holy Spirit will powerfully use public evangelism to reap an abundant harvest.

To paraphrase a Biblical principle "Whatever the church sows that it will also reap." Public Evangelism is effective when the emphasis is on people and not just numbers. God honors a life totally dedicated to loving people for Jesus sake, meeting their needs, sharing His message and inviting them to make the most important decision of their lives. God has promised when the church is engaged in the ongoing cycle of evangelism, and His people unselfishly and genuinely share His love with others, His power will be unleashed. Miracles will happen and lives transformed. Your offering today will contribute to Grow Michigan helping you share the gospel through various outreaches including Unlock Revelation next year!

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